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VOCATIONAL CORE PROGRAM.

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A 10-YEAR PROGRAM FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTHS IS DESCRIBED. ITS OBJECTIVES WERE TO--(1) MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE NO INTEREST IN OR ABILITY TO ADAPT TO A REGULAR SCHOOL PROGRAM, (2) RELIEVE THE CLASSROOM TEACHER OF DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS WHICH BECOME TIME CONSUMING TO THE POINT THAT OTHER CLASS MEMBERS ARE PENALIZED, AND (3) ESTABLISH A FLEXIBLE SCHOOL PROGRAM WHICH INCLUDES ACTIVITIES BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY. CRITERIA FOR STUDENT SELECTION INCLUDED (1) POOR GENERAL ATTITUDE, (2) LACK OF INTEREST IN THE REGULAR CURRICULUM, (3) CHRONIC MISBEHAVIOR, (4) PETTY CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES, (5) INCORRIGIBLE TRUANCY, (6) INABILITY TO GET ALONG WITH OTHER PEOPLE, AND (7) DROPOUT POTENTIAL. SCHEDULING WAS DONE ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS BY THE VOCATIONAL CORE TEACHER. STUDENTS WERE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN A WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AND TAKE COURSES WHICH THEY WANTED TO TAKE AND IN WHICH THEY MIGHT SUCCEED. THE PROGRAM OPERATES AT THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL. JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS RECEIVED CREDIT AS RECOMMENDED BY THE VOCATIONAL CORE TEACHER AND AT THE SENIOR HIGH LEVEL, THE PRINCIPAL COOPERATED IN THIS RECOMMENDATION. THE STUDENT MAY TRANSFER TO THE REGULAR CURRICULUM AT WILL. EXTENSIVE INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING IS DONE BY THE VOCATIONAL CORE TEACHER. (EM)

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VOCATIONAL CORE PROGRAM

1966

VT 01733

HOBBS MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS
HOBBS, NEW MEXICO

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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INTRODUCTION

The following pages contain a comprehensive report on an outstanding program currently in operation at Hobbs Public Schools in Hobbs, New Mexico. The program is designed to challenge and to meet the complex needs of disadvantaged youths. The history, the operation, and the personnel involved in this program are items of extreme interest and fascination. This program has received state-wide acclaim and many visitations. Many attempts to copy it have been made. This program is over ten years old and was conceived by three dedicated teachers who were interested in salvaging and rehabilitating each disadvantaged student who could not meet the rigors of ordinary academic life. The program is referred to by several as: "The Spurlock Program" "Vocational Core Program," "Plan for Diversified Vocational Education," and "A Program for Problem Learners." Regardless of the title by which it is referred to, this program is a daring and logical approach to helping disadvantaged children. The success of this program, for boys and girls alike, has been remarkable. Although it cannot be measured in terms of dollars, results show up in terms of reduced dropouts, the acquisition of self-interest, and the successful graduation of many "problem" students. The prevailing theme of this program can be found in the following statements: "I can and I will help these children," "Students can be taught that work is honorable," "I can be important," and "We must give the unsuccessful student a feeling of importance and responsibility."

HOBBS, NEW MEXICO AND ITS SCHOOLS

Hobbs is located in the southeastern corner of New Mexico, five miles from the Texas line, 70 miles east of Carlsbad, New Mexico, and 250 miles northeast of El Paso, Texas. The city is located in the Permian Oil Basin and started with the oil development in 1929. The oil industry is the economic base of the Hobbs area.

With most of its schools, churches, business houses, homes and street improvements having been built since the war, Hobbs is more modern than most cities of its size.

The city has a population of nearly 31,000 and a surrounding rural population of approximately 5000, with a total school population of over 8,600 pupils. The school population is almost entirely English speaking and presents school problems no different from those of other towns of similar size.

Hobbs has a modern high school plant on a 45 acre site, three junior high schools and ten elementary schools. At present, all students are housed in modern brick buildings. Free textbooks and supplementary teaching aids such as reading materials and maps, are provided by the state.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

It is the responsibility of the Hobbs Municipal Schools to provide through continuous improvement a planned educational program that affords the opportunity for each student to realize maximum development as an individual and as a contributing member of the community and our democratic society. The schools should motivate and help each student to develop to his full capacity (1) a wholesome attitude toward our democratic government, in a republic, and family life, and an appreciation for the achievements of others, (2) a compliance with and respect for the rules and regulations of society, (3) the spiritual, moral, aesthetic values conducive to a full and rewarding life, (4) an understanding of the workaday world and his possibilities and responsibilities within it, (5) general knowledge and basic skills, (6) emotional stability, social adjustment, and physical health, and (7) creative, analytical thinking which will enable him to solve problems arising out of our changing world.

OPERATION OF THE VOCATIONAL CORE PROGRAM

Selection of Students

This program, based on what is commonly known as a flexible core curriculum, is one in which the subjects are designed to meet the needs, problems, and interest of adolescents selected from problem areas. The Hobbs School District made the assumption that the conventional educational program was not fulfilling the needs of many disadvantaged or special students. The Vocational Core Program is an attempt to design a flexible schedule for individual students who are not progressing adequately in the regular instructional program.

The program's method of operation is as unique as the total program. The method of operation was developed 12 years ago by three far-sighted teachers in Houston Junior High. This program has been used for 11 years and has been revised as needed. Over the years, the Vocational Core Program has developed an image of being a status program to all students. This was planned and maintained by keeping information concerning the program from the students and calling the class "Mr. Spurlock's class." The student is asked if he might like to participate in the class <u>if</u> they can get him in. Care was taken to make the student want in the program. The idea given the student is "If we can get Mr. Spurlock to take you, do you want in his class?"

Some students who do not need the program have attempted to get in. This was expected and the selection technique used politely did not accept them. Because of the tact used in initiating and continuing the program, the social stigma of a remedial or special class has not developed.

Students are selected for the Vocational Core Program by the building principal, teachers, counselors, and Vocational Core teachers on the following criteria:

1. Poor general attitude
2. Evidence of lack of interest in the regular program
3. Chronic misbehavior
4. Petty criminal activities
5. Incorrigible truancy
6. Inability to get along with other people
7. Potential dropout

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the Vocational Core Program are as follows:

I. To meet the needs of students who have no interest in or ability to adapt to a regular school program.

II. To relieve the classroom teacher of discipline problems that become time consuming to the point that other members of the class are penalized.

III. To establish such a flexible school program that will include activities both in and out of the regular school day.

The Vocational Core Program seeks to meet these aims through a program which is designed for each individual student. The Vocational Core teachers are allowed to develop individual students' schedules in any way that they feel will benefit the student. By developing a schedule that includes only subjects of interest to the student, he is encouraged to remain in school. On-the-job work experience for boys and girls at the junior high and high school levels plays an important part in the schedule of the student. At the secondary level, some students have the privilege of working at a steady job where their only connection with school is the Vocational Core teacher.

Following are the objectives formulated for the program. One, to help train the student to have some kind of trade or saleable skill. Students at the secondary level are given the opportunity of taking vocational classes and the Vocational Core teacher attempts to find part-time employment for his students. At the junior high level, the students in the program are given an opportunity to work as sack boys for the local grocery stores after they have received such preparation as advice on grooming, instruction on sacking procedures, and participating in group discussions on how to meet and work with people. Girls are given instruction in ironing, sewing, cooking, grooming, and social skills. These are only starts in the program. Later students branch out to various vocational pursuits which might include such occupations as welding, plumbing, fry cooking, or working in cleaners. Girls in Vocational Core classes gain work experience by working as teachers' aides for elementary or special education teachers, as office workers, as aides in non-profit institutions, or as maids in private homes.

An additional objective of the program is to help the student find a place in society. All junior high students are encouraged to take a social science class. The Vocational Core students are put in classes where the instructor is cognizant of the problems of the Vocational Core student and he prepares his lessons for the two levels of students in the class. Discussion on such topics as government, why we work, responsibilities to friends, teachers, parents, employers, and the community are conducted in the Vocational Core class or on an individual basis.

The third objective is to instill within the student the honor of being self-supporting and of making his contribution to society. All of the Vocational Core Programs give the student an opportunity to obtain a job outside of school. In connection with the employment is a savings program in which each employed boy at Houston Junior High must participate, subject to the discretion of the teacher in charge. Savings are deposited with the teacher who in turn deposits them to the account of each boy.

Girls in the junior high and senior high programs work at a variety of jobs. Some jobs which they participate in include teacher helpers at the elementary level, office aides, aides in non-profit institutions (hospitals, nursing homes), or private business.

High school boys work at various occupations, depending upon qualifications, or areas of interest in which they can secure employment. The Vocational Core instructor has the responsibility of placing students at his discretion. High school boys work at many different occupations with variable schedules for employment.

Work experience is an integral part of the program. All Vocational Core programs strive for work experience in the student's schedule. The junior high boys' program uses two chain stores in the community for its source of employment. Students work as sack boys on a schedule set up by the Vocational Core instructor. Junior high students may work a maximum of 3 hours per school day and may be excused from class for work experience.

The fourth objective of the Vocational Core Program is to develop character within the student. The Vocational Core Program approaches this objective through individual and group counseling, and work

experience. A concerted effort is made to see that the student is given a chance to excel in something.

Mr. Spurlock in an annual report stated: "Boys with the greater problems were specially encouraged to learn chess and were offered awards to beat the teacher. Usually they did, for one or 'another' reason. This created the desired relationship."

Personal interest and individual counseling seem to be large factors in the success of this objective.

Individual counseling takes place in an informal, no pressure atmosphere in the classroom, at the place of employment, in the home, or whenever interaction between student and instructor take place. Much counseling takes place over a game or activity such as chess or checkers.

The last objective is to guide the student back into the regular curriculum in as many areas as he will and can accept. Many students, after a period of individual counseling and help, return to the regular curriculum. Some students who are incapable, or unwilling, to enroll in the complete curriculum are encouraged to take the courses in which they have an interest. The Vocational Core instructor is careful not to let the student take any courses that would cause him to give up and drop out of school.

Scheduling

The schedule for each student is worked out by the principal, the Vocational Core instructor and the student. It should be understood that the schedule is developed for each individual and the interest and needs of the student are of primary consideration. Some students may be in the Vocational Core class for the majority

of the day while others may only have one period in the Vocational Core class. If the student is in the Vocational Core Program, the Vocational Core teacher and any other instructor who has the student in his class work together to establish a final grade. The Vocational Core teacher has the final job of entering grades for his students. The administration has given the Vocational Core teacher complete control over grades given students enrolled in his or her program. The abbreviation VC is entered on permanent record cards of the students in the program.

The progression of the student through school is an interesting matter. Those who are at junior high level receive credit and progress as recommended by the Vocational Core teacher. Progress at senior high level is based on the recommendation of the Vocational Core instructor and the principal.

Upon a student's request, he may be scheduled in regular classes part of the time, or all of the time, if he is able to convince the building principal he is sincere and deserves a chance. His class status is then determined at the office.

Procedures

Because of the flexibility of the schedule, there is no definite lesson plan for Vocational Core classes. Mr. Spurlock, who has been teaching in the program for 11 years, said, "I do not know what will be going on next period."

During class periods, students engage in a variety of activities set up to create good counseling situations.

An annual report states: "In our experience we have found typing to be a good front activity. "Everybody" wants to take typing. Our job, as we see it, is not to teach typing, but to let the activity discipline the student and give opportunity for counseling."

Incentive awards are given for the number of lessons completed. Jigsaw maps of New Mexico (cut into counties), the United States (divided into states), and continents (separated into nations), are used to teach geography, but, more significantly, to develop a sense of achievement within the student.

Chess and checkers are used in the classroom to create a counseling atmosphere just as adults "talk over coffee." This activity was used extensively for beginning students to develop lines of communication between the student and the instructor. Individual and group counseling sessions are carried on in an informal classroom atmosphere. The Vocational Core class has no standard curriculum nor does it necessarily observe regular school hours.

A partial list of suggested class topics follows:

1. A study of vocational subjects and commercial subjects both in the classroom and on-the-job training.
2. Citizenship training.
3. Physical education and sports activities.
4. Citizenship activities (community responsibilities; such as, activities worked out with community groups, art events, city facilities, etc.)
5. Some practical English for filing job applications, completing insurance forms, spelling, etc.

6. Some practical economics for money, banking, insurance, budgeting, saving, etc.

7. Social opportunities for formation of a club with parliamentary procedure, parties, banquets, socials, and assemblies.

8. To serve as an employment agency or bureau, in which the class participates.

Other activities include, typing, chess, checkers, ironing, cooking, shop work, sewing, and grooming. Many of these activities seem to be time fillers unless they are studied in depth.

Financial Support

Currently, Title I funds are being used to provide certain equipment and supplies for the Vocational Core classes. These disadvantaged youth would have no opportunity for certain projects without Title I. Title I funds were used to furnish materials for girls in the Vocational Core class to make dresses under guidance of women in the community. After completion of the projects a style show was held by the girls to display what they had accomplished.

Monies from the Vocational Education Act of 1963 have been used to support the program. The majority of the funds for the program are provided by Hobbs Public Schools.

Plans have been made to utilize work study monies in the Vocational Core Program when sufficient funds become available. The Vocational Core Program is a logical place to incorporate student work into public community services.

Evaluation

This type of program has been attempted at various locations outside of the Hobbs school system with varying degrees of success.

When the question was asked, "Why does the Vocational Core Program at Hobbs work?" various reasons were given. The philosophy and attitudes of the administration and staff were given as being the greatest contributors to the success of the program. The administration seemed to believe one of the important factors was the selection of the right personnel for the job.

Another contributing factor was the development of a privileged class attitude among the students. This attitude was planned and conceived at the beginning of the program. The program has not been downgraded or identified as apart from the regular curriculum. The flexibility of scheduling and the cooperation of Vocational Core instructors and the administration in individualizing each students program was considered as an important aspect in the success of the program.

The instructors felt that the administration giving them a free hand in designing the students schedule and the curriculum of the Vocational Core class was a necessity for the success of this program.

The question was asked, "What is the most common problem in the Vocational Core Program?"

All instructors said that scheduling was their largest problem to overcome. They were quick to explain that the full support of the administration minimized this difficulty.

The results of this program are impossible to state in terms of money, improvement in citizenship, or an improved self-value. Administrators and teachers are aware of a decrease in the number of dropouts. Many students have returned to the regular curriculum

after a semester or more in the Vocational Core. At the senior high level, many of these students have received their diplomas. It should be remembered that one of the criteria for the selection of these students was because they were potential dropouts.

Many of the students have acquired noticeably better grooming habits while in the Vocational Core Program. At the junior high level, the boys have to meet acceptable grooming habits to be allowed to work. Grooming habits are hard to evaluate, but teachers and administrators indicate they have noticed improvement in the grooming habits of Vocational Core students.

The students develop a sense of accomplishment and status in the Vocational Core Program. The instructor seeks something that the student can do to insure this. Status for the student is gained through the reputation of the program, money earned, and sometimes the change in grooming habits.

NUMBERS OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN VOCATIONAL CORE CLASSES

	56-57	57-58	58-59	59-60	60-61	61-62	62-63	63-64	64-65	65-66	66-67
Junior High Boys	69	107	101	86	99	119	110	124	118	116	
Junior High Girls				28	35*	35*	35*	35*	34	44	
High School Boys									46	50*	50+
High School Girls									35*	35*	33+

* estimates
\+ current enrollment will fluctuate

The above enrollment figures are misleading. At the start of the school year the Vocational Core teacher has no students assigned to his or her class. As students are referred to the class enrollment climbs. Enrollment fluctuates because of students returning to regular classes, new students entering, and various other reasons. An accurate count of students participating during a school year is difficult to obtain because of the flexibility of the program.

Facilities are provided for instruction and practice in sewing, ironing, and food preparation.

Mr. Omer Spurlock, Vocational Core instructor for 12 years at Houston Junior High works on his weekly student work schedule.

Mr. Joe Morgan, Vocational Core instructor at Hobbs High School supervises a VC student in the school shop.

Girls in the Vocational Core class at Houston Junior High preparing food in the kitchen provided Title I funds were used to provide kitchen utensils and supplies.